

How to buy a car WITHOUT BEING TAKEN for a ride!



BY JACQUI HERRITT

IF YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS, you know that now is not a good time to be in the automotive business. The manufacturers are suffering and will do anything and everything to sell.

These dire times provide an ideal opportunity for anyone who is looking to get a nice ride for less. However, a consumer still needs to take the steps necessary to make sure their new dream car does not turn into a nightmare. Here are a few rules of thumb you need to keep in mind when buying a new (or used) car.

First, do your research! Make sure the car has a strong customer satisfaction rating, provides the features you need and want, and is priced within your range.

Also, if you are purchasing a used car, it is worth hiring an outside mechanic to check the car out prior to signing on the dotted line.

At our website (www.lemonlaw.com) we have a "lemon dodger" used car buying worksheet that provides all the questions you need to ask before taking the car off the lot.

Also, ask family, friends and neighbors. Often overlooked, these are some of the very best resources for car shoppers. In many cases, they can provide reliable and useful information about the vehicle you may be considering.

Look at websites like:

- ✓ Consumer Reports (www.consumerreports.org) is a great source of information.
- ✓ For pre-owned cars, check out the Kelly Blue Book (www.kbb.com).
- ✓ While CarFax (www.carfax.com) is very useful, their report may be incomplete and not include smaller accidents not reported to insurance companies.

Second, know the MSRP, the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price. Unless a car is in high demand, dealers generally sell cars lower than MSRP. And don't forget to shop around; call several authorized dealers to see if they can get a better offer for you. Identical cars are widely available from dealer to dealer; it's only the price that changes!

Third, it's very important to try it before you buy it. Before you sign the papers and drive off, try every feature, from the defroster to the stereo to the horn. Take the car for a lengthy test drive, listen for



unusual sounds and pay attention to how the car steers, accelerates, brakes, and handles. If something isn't working properly, don't sign anything and don't accept promises to fix it after the sale!

This is the one time you have total control over the dealer and salesperson. Stay in control and demand perfection before you sign or you may be buying a headache down the road.

Fourth, never purchase a car without a manufacturer's warranty, whether new or used. Otherwise, getting your car fixed properly by qualified mechanics, with the

maximum of expertise and the minimum of hassle, may be next to impossible. If the manufacturer of the car will issue a warranty, it must stand behind the work performed.

Finally, know your rights! If you have purchased a new car or a car with an existing manufacturer's warranty and you have a reoccurring problem that they can't seem to fix, you do have legal rights. Best of all, legal help is completely free to consumers under State and Federal Laws. Don't be afraid to consult an attorney if needed.

Jacqui Herritt is one of the country's most prominent consumer attorneys. For the past ten years, she has served as Managing Attorney for the Lemon Law and automotive consumer advocacy firm of Kimmel & Silverman. For more information on the Lemon Law and the free legal representation, call 1-800-LEMON-LAW (1-800-536-6652) or visit Kimmel & Silverman's website at www.lemonlaw.com.



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